

Message Text

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SUBJECT: PRESS REACTION TO AMBASSADOR'S INTERVIEW IN EPOCA
MAGAZINE

REF: ROME 13043

SUMMARY: PRESS COVERAGE OF AMBASSADOR'S INTERVIEW TO EPOCA MAGAZINE (REFTEL) WAS HEAVY AND GENERALLY RAN ALONG PREDICTABLE LINES. COMMUNIST DAILY WAS SHARPLY CRITICAL, SOCIALIST PAPER EXPRESSED "PREOCCUPATION" THAT INTERVIEW MIGHT IMPLY "THREAT WHICH WOULD CONSTITUTE INTERFERENCE IN ITALIAN AFFAIRS," ULTRA LEFT (COMMUNIST) MANIFESTO DEMANDED AMBASSADOR'S EXPULSION BY ITALIAN GOVERNMENT. MODERATE PRESS GENERALLY GAVE INTERVIEW PROMINENT COVERAGE BUT WITHHELD EDITORIAL COMMENT. RIGHT OF CENTER ROME DAILY, IL TEMPO, WARMLY PRAISED AMBASSADOR'S STAND. NOTABLE EXCEPTION TO PREVAILING REACTION OF MODERATE PRESS WAS SHARP CRITICISM OF INTERVIEW BY FIAT-OWNED TURIN DAILY LA STAMPA. INTERVIEW SHOULD HAVE BENEFICIAL EFFECT IN UNDERCUTTING GROUNDS FOR CONTINUED PRESS SPECULATION CONCERNING A POSSIBLE CHANGE IN USG ATTITUDE TOWARD THE PCI AND THE EVENTUALITY OF COMMUNIST PARTICIPATION IN THE ITALIAN GOVERNMENT. END SUMMARY.

1. EXCERPTS FROM AMBASSADOR VOLPE'S INTERVIEW WITH
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EPOCA MAGAZINE RELEASED IN ADVANCE BY EPOCA AND

CARRIED BY ITALIAN WIRE SERVICE (ANSA) SEPTEMBER 10. INTERVIEW EXCERPTS PRODUCED VERY HEAVY PRESS COVERAGE WHICH GENERALLY FOLLOWED PREDICTABLE LINES. MAJORITY OF NON-PARTY PAPERS, INCLUDING CORRIERE DELLA SERA, RESTO DEL CARLINO, AND NAZIONE REPORTED INTERVIEW FACTUALLY AND WITHOUT EDITORIAL COMMENT. SIMILAR TREATMENT GIVEN BY CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC DAILY IL POPOLO AND REPUBLICAN PARTY PAPER.

LEFT OF CENTER TURIN DAILY LA STAMPA (FIAT-OWNED) WAS NOTABLE EXCEPTION TO THIS TREND. PAPER'S ROME CORRESPONDENT SHARPLY CRITICIZED INTERVIEW AS "OPEN INTERFERENCE IN ITALIAN AFFAIRS" AND, IN CURIOUS NON SEQUITUR, WONDERED WHETHER AMBASSADOR VOLPE IS SUITABLE U.S. REPRESENTATIVE IN COUNTRY "HAVING FRIENDLY RELATIONS BOTH WITH USSR AND CHINA."

3. COMMUNIST PRESS REACTED SHARPLY TO INTERVIEW. ULTRA LEFT MANIFESTO DEMANDED AMBASSADOR'S EXPULSION BY ITALIAN GOVERNMENT. COMMUNIST PARTY (PCI) DAILY L'UNITA HEADLINED COMPARISON OF AMBASSADOR WITH FORMER AMBASSADOR LUCE AND TERMED INTERVIEW "UMPTENTH, BUT STILL VERY SERIOUS ATTEMPT" BY AMBASSADOR TO INTERFERE IN ITALIAN AFFAIRS. PCI ORGAN REAFFIRMED PARTY'S CLAIM TO FULL DEMOCRATIC CREDENTIALS AND HEATEDLY DENIED THAT "EVENTUAL POLITICAL CHANGES" IN ITALY (I.E., PCI ENTRY INTO GOVERNMENT) WOULD BE CONTRARY TO DETENTE. L'UNITA ASSERTED THAT PCI HAS "ALWAYS CLEARLY STATED" THAT SUCH POLITICAL CHANGED "MUST NOT AFFECT BALANCE OF FORCES BETWEEN THE BLOCS." FURTHERMORE, PAPER CONTENTS, AMBASSADOR IS WRONG IN SEEING "DOMESTIC CHANGES IN A COUNTRY DEMOCRATICALLY BROUGHT ABOUT BY ITS CITIZENS, AS FACTORS OF CHANGE IN THE INTERNATIONAL BALANCE." PCI DAILY CONCLUDES CRITICAL, IF SOMEWHAT DEFENSIVE, EDITORIAL BY DECRYING "UNDEMOCRATIC" NATURE OF U.S. VISA LAWS BARRING COMMUNISTS FROM ENTRY AND TERMS U.S. ONE OF "VERY FEW COUNTRIES IN WORLD WHERE THE GRANTING OF AN ENTRY VISA DEPENDS ON THE POLITICAL AND IDEOLOGICAL POSITION OF A CITIZEN."

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4. SOCIALIST DAILY, AVANTI, IS ALSO CRITICAL OF INTERVIEW. AVANTI EDITORIAL EXPRESSES CONCERN REGARDING "VEILED HINTS OF U.S. 'NON-INDIFFERENCE' TO ITALIAN DEVELOPMENTS CONTAINED IN INTERVIEW. "IF THESE REPEATED PHRASES HIDE A THREAT, THEN WE WOULD BE FACED WITH A VERY SERIOUS AND OF COURSE UNACCEPTABLE INTERFERENCE IN OUR DOMESTIC AFFAIRS."

5. CENTRIST MILAN DAILY, IL GIORNALE, GIVES AMBASSADOR'S REMARKS FRONT-PAGE COVERAGE UNDER SUB-HEADLINE "INTERVIEW WITH AMBASSADOR VOLPE RULES OUT ALL AMBIGUITIES." PAPER'S ROME CORRESPONDENT COMMENTS THAT "VOLPE HAS PERSONALLY AND PUBLICALLY DENIED THE COMMUNIST ATTEMPT TO GAIN CREDENCE FOR AN (ALLEGEDLY) NEW, MORE FRIENDLY ATTITUDE TOWARD THE PCI AND THE PCI'S POSSIBLE PARTICIPATION IN POWER IN ITALY."

6. RIGHT OF CENTER ROME DAILY, IL TEMPO, GIVES FIVE-COLUMN FRONT-PAGE COVERAGE TO INTERVIEW AND EDITORIAL COMMENT. PAPER TERMS INTERVIEW "SERENE REPLY" TO EPOCA INTERVIEWER'S QUESTIONS CONCERNING A PRESUMED CHANGE IN U.S. POLICY TOWARD THE PCI.

7. COMMENT: HEAVY PRESS COVERAGE AND SHARP REACTION FROM COMMUNIST PARTY SUGGEST INTERVIEW TOUCHED EXPOSED NERVES ON LEFT. IT SHOULD HAVE BENEFICIAL EFFECT IN UNDERCUTTING GROUNDS FOR CONTINUED PRESS SPECULATION CONCERNING A POSSIBLE CHANGE IN USG ATTITUDE TOWARD THE PCI AND THE EVENTUALITY OF COMMUNIST PARTICIPATION IN THE ITALIAN GOVERNMENT. VOLPE

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